

## Crushing Effects of Failure.

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God ? " sneered the peasant. " Who knows what God is, or if there be a God ? " By his violence, his lack of discipline, his bibulousness, his inexperience in tactics, his proneness to panic in the presence of the trained soldier, the treachery of some of his leaders, the incapacity of others, he had lost what was in the main a good cause—the cause of justice against oppression, practical Christianity against a tyrannic and degrading social system which was but a parody of true religion. He had failed to vindicate claims which a more enlightened age has come to regard as rights, and he was now, except in a few cases, as in Baden, whose margrave granted some reforms, to reap the penalty of failure in the tightening of his bonds, the aggravation of his oppression. " After the victories they have gained," says the chronicler Anshelm, " the princes and lords have become more merciless and unyielding than before, so that those who either from fear or from impotence had left their dependants unmolested, and those (of whom there were but few) who had the reputation for some share of mercy and goodness, were now alike moved to greater severity, thinking to restrain the ass with a tighter bit and curb, and thus keep him in check." Social reform was killed, social abuse had received a new lease of life. The leases and feudal titles which the peasants had torn up were replaced by new ones, far more exacting. Or, worse still, the only lease or title was henceforth the lord's arbitrary will. From bad, things had gone to worse. While the price of food continued to rise, wages fell to half of what they had previously been. " The peasants," says Sebastian Münster, " lead miserable, abject lives. Their homes are wretched huts made of wood and mud, standing on the earth and roofed with straw ; their food is black rye bread, oatmeal porridge, and boiled peas and lentils ; water and whey are their drinks ; a pair of *bundschuhs* and a felt hat make up their clothing. They are obliged to render frequent service to their lords during the year, to till the fields, to sow seeds, to chop wood, and dig graves. There is nothing that these poor folk are not expected to do, and they cannot evade their duties without penalty."

Thus the peasant revolution in Germany in the sixteenth century was a total failure as an effort of social progress. We have called it a revolution, and, in its violent character, it